

MARCH, 1968

No. 226

Guide

A PUBLICATION OF THE PAULIST
INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

Post-Conciliar Church

Understanding the Scriptures

Diocesan Renewal

FRANCISCAN THEO. SEM.
OLD MISSION
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93101



Timing and Renewal

They tell a story about an official who served in the British Foreign Office from 1905 to 1950. On retiring, he advised his successor: "The important thing is not to get flustered. Ever since I've been here, people have been saying that there is going to be a war, and I have kept insisting that there would not be a war. And I've been wrong only twice!"

Many Catholics are now insisting, not only on the necessity for change in the Church, but also that the changes should not be unduly delayed. But like the myopic, super-cautious Englishman, the advisers closest to policy-makers in the Church too often advise putting on the brakes when they should urge leaders to step on the gas.

Whenever it becomes necessary to apply correctives for an unhealthy situation, timing becomes as important as the remedy itself. Not only *what* you do, but *when* you do it is of the essence of the cure. When a ship is on fire, or a dwelling collapsing, or a person is dangerously ill, a remedy may fail not only because it is too little but also because it is too late!

The essential permanence of the Church is assured by a divine guarantee. "The gates of hell shall not prevail." But history gives us innumerable instances of the defeats and suffering that can come when stalling, relative inaction, procrastination and undue delay are preferred to reasonable speed.

The almost unlimited scope of change in our world and its effect on men—along with the rapidity with which these transformations have occurred—have created an emergency situation both for mankind and the community which exists to serve the world. Manifest and deep-rooted weaknesses in the Church have been identified, and a gigantic program for renewal inaugurated by an ecumenical council. What we need most now is not over-caution but a vivid sense of urgency in applying the Council's decrees.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

Guide, No. 226, March, 1968

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025. Second class postage paid at Ridgewood, N.J., and additional mailing offices. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10c a copy; 5c in bulk to Seminarians.

Hans Kung on The Post-Conciliar Church

John Horgan

Professor Kung, has the synod, from the structural point of view, yet achieved what was hoped for?

The synod is certainly a great step forward in comparison with the pre-conciliar Church. I think it is a demonstration of the fact that the time of one-man government, in the Catholic Church as elsewhere, is over, and its structure has some very positive aspects.

I would especially mention the fact that the members are freely elected, and elected in a just proportion: I think it is also a good thing that the Pope can nominate some people of his own choice. It was really possible, in this synod, to hear the different opinions current in the whole Catholic Church, and coming from all over the world. This is all positive.

From the negative point of view, I think that this synod has to be a permanent thing. As matters stand at the moment, all the people who came to Rome to take part in its deliberations are now without further responsibility. They should remain members of the synod for when it meets again.

In the second place, it should meet at regular intervals, like a parliament. Without regularity of this kind an institution has no continuing influence.

Thirdly, it needs a certain deliberative vote. This it has at the moment, but only if the Pope gives it. There should certainly be a certain influence in the decision-making process from the side of the Pope, but it will not be good if it remains purely consultative, as it was during this session. It is, in fact, a curious situation when everybody expresses his opinion and then

goes home, while nobody knows what will really be done.

Finally, the members of the synod need more possibilities for the exercise of their free initiative. It is a bad thing, for instance, if they have no voice in saying what should go on the agenda. It is very curious to see that one of the main problems of the post-conciliar Church, and a problem which is considered everywhere as being of particular gravity—I mean, the problem of clerical celibacy—was not discussed in the synod. I believe that many bishops there would have liked to discuss it.

The synod has been compared to a parliament, but also to a cabinet meeting: how accurate are these comparisons?

What I have already said indicates that there are many similarities between a synod and a parliament. There are among its members, for instance, elected, representatives of the different (i.e. local) churches who have the obligation to discuss the problems before them. There are also differences, however: the absence of regular meetings, the absence of influence over the agenda, and so on. I think we could learn much more from the modern parliaments, many of which already have a very long history, and have acquired a great deal of experience which we lack, since we do not have a very strong democratic tradition in the modern Church—although we did have such a tradition in the early Church. We

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can, therefore, learn from secular, political experience.

I don't think that the synod has to be a cabinet meeting, because without the synod we have, practically, no parliament, and the problems discussed are problems of general interest. There is absolutely no reason why these things have to be discussed secretly. We might even apply the old maxim, often quoted in canon law, *quod ad omnes pertinet, ab omnibus tractari debet*: what belongs to the interests of everybody should be treated by everybody. Everybody is interested, for instance, and especially in our countries, in the question of mixed marriages, and we would like to hear what the bishops assembled in the synod thought about this problem. There is no reason why these discussions should not be carried out in public. Among other things, secrecy only gives rise to a lot of false rumors.

What, in your opinion, was the significance of the discussion on doctrine?

The doctrinal discussion showed clearly that it is no longer possible to resolve today's most complex theological problems by authoritarian decisions. As soon as there is genuine discussion—which is what has happened—it becomes obvious that these matters need to be treated by scholars.

I am happy about two things in the synod. The first is that it refrained from making doctrinal decisions which might only have harmed the present development of the Church, and gave instead some pastoral indications as to how it would like to have treated theology.

Theologians today have much more authority and much more importance than they had before, and this means that they also have more responsibility. If the pastors give the theologians—the “doctors” in the Church—more freedom, then we theologians are ready and willing to accept this pastoral guidance. We need mutual collaboration between the pastors and the doctors—to use St. Paul's terminology—between the successors of the apostles and the successors of the teachers or doctors, in order to ensure collaboration between the two complementary authorities, the pastoral and the scientific.

The second positive point is the proposal to establish a Theological Commission. There is, of course, a certain danger that this might tend to institutionalize theology in Rome, but I don't believe the bishops had in mind the creation of a body of people who would live permanently in Rome and who would become “Romanized” in a very short time. As I understand it, it is a commission of people from outside, people who are living and working in different countries.

I only hope that they will choose the best from each country, and from the widest possible trends of opinion, in order to ensure that this is not a commission in which only one major tendency will be represented. This commission can have a very good effect if it represents all the different tendencies in the Church, and I know that the Pope himself is very open and very much in favor of this. He knows that it would not be good to exclude any significant trend of opinion from such a body.

I am hopeful, therefore, that we will see the creation of a good organ of opinion which may not be able to *resolve* all the problems—it would be illusory to imagine that it could—but which could help by indicating the general guidelines along which we can expect to resolve our problems. We do not need solutions of specific problems so much as an indication of the perspectives within which balanced solutions can be worked out.

Reaction to the synodal discussion on mixed marriages has been varied: what is your assessment of it?

The synod's treatment of mixed marriages was the most disappointing of the session. I find the present situation absurd and I am very surprised that more bishops did not see things as they really are. We have whole parishes in Germany where half, more or less, of the marriages involving Catholics are invalid: in the main parish of Tübingen, for instance, this is the proportion of mixed marriages involving Catholics which are regarded as invalid because they have been carried out without the canonical form—the presence of the Catholic priest and two witnesses.

Pastoral work is really impossible without a solution of this problem. I even seriously doubt that the Church can declare as invalid before God a marriage which has been made by the ordinary consensus that is the basis of real marriage.

Two things are absolutely necessary and are extremely urgent if we are not to lose more people than we have lost already. The first is to acknowledge the validity of such marriages even if they are celebrated outside the Church, and to find a concrete solution to the problem of handling this from the liturgical point of view. The second is to give the parents themselves the right, in conscience, to decide about the baptism and education of the children. All other solutions are, from the practical point of view, an imposition of the conscience of one partner, and the situation cannot be resolved by medieval principles.

It is an emergency situation, and it needs an emergency solution. The declaration of the council on religious liberty and freedom of conscience, precisely in this context, should not remain just a phrase. And it would be better to emphasize the rights of parents in mixed marriages than in the question of Catholic schools.

Does the synod's treatment of the liturgical questions mark a real advance?

We seem to have mastered the major problems until now. I am happy that we will have the possibility of using different eucharistic prayers—Canons—in the Mass and that developments in this respect in Rome are always going forward and not backward.

As the bishops said in the synod—and this is very important—we need a radical reform carried out decisively at one moment, and no more of the “salami” tactics. I would only express one fear, and that is lest we should have a new ritualization of our liturgy—that the liturgy might not become more of a living thing but might become ritualized afresh. I don't for instance, like having so many readings and am glad that the bishops suggested that not three but two were enough. Often, even, one reading is enough, but I would emphasize that

this reading has to be explained to the people in an intelligent and modern way.

Songs and prayers, too, should really be in modern language, and should not be confined only to translations.

We need a much more familiar liturgy, and I hope that the new regulations will give the opportunity for much more spontaneity and will not attempt to apply too much control to something that can only be lived vitally.

What would you like to see on the agenda for the next synod?

There are many important and far-reaching problems which might be discussed, but I would like to mention specifically one problem, small in itself, but a problem which lies at the heart of many of the difficulties we are having in the post-conciliar Church: the reform of the Roman Curia.

I am very satisfied with the program which Pope Paul has developed in his Apostolic Constitution dealing with this matter: but this program cannot be carried out by the Curia as it has existed in the past.

What has already been done in a very few cases—the appointment of people like Cardinal Garronne and Cardinal Villot—has to be done on a much wider scale, and also in more depth. Unfortunately, the great majority of all recent appointments both within the Curia and in the nunciatures are deeply disappointing: forever the same Italian prelates making their customary careers, and not enough new and competent men with new and courageous ideas.

We still have a basically Italian rather than a Catholic Curia, and this very seriously harms the authority of the Pope both inside and outside the Catholic Church.

What could President Kennedy have achieved with President Eisenhower's cabinet? We do not need a new Pope, as a lot of people say, but we do need a new cabinet, and a Pope has even more authority to change his cabinet than has a President of the United States.

It is not any dogma, but rather the mentality of the “Roman Court,” which is the major obstacle to making the change

from the realm of theory into that of fact.

I do not like repeating on all occasions my boring *Ceterum censeo, Curiam Romanum esse reformatandam* ("Moreover, it is my conviction that the Roman Curia must be reformed"), but the alternative is even more boring—a Church that is too paralyzed to resolve her most vital problems: birth control, mixed marriages, celibacy, decentralization, the reform of hierarchical pomp, a better system of episcopal nomination with the collaboration of a representative body of clergy and laity, and so on.

In this context, I would like especially to repeat a suggestion which I have made several times already—that the election of a new Pope should be carried out by a

representative organ, and not by the college of cardinals, which is not representative enough and which is still dominated, *de facto* if not *de jure*, by a very conservative Italian minority. The last consistory was, for a very great part of the Church, a great disappointment.

What we need is the election of the Pope by an organ which is representative of the whole Church. This means, in effect, that the next Pope should be elected by the Synod of Bishops. This is a very legitimate desire, and one which has tremendous consequences for the future of the Church: we should repeat it, even if not everybody in Rome agrees with it.

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Understanding the Scriptures

Hilaire Duesberg, O.S.B.

"These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures (Lk. 24, 44-45).

This text is primary if we are to seat Christian doctrine on its scriptural bases (cf. Lk. 24, 25-27; Acts 3, 18; 13, 2-3; Jn. 5, 39, 46). It is the last and supreme lesson (vv. 44-48) the Master gave his disciples. It furnishes the kerygmatic theme with which the apostles were charged, at the same time that they were commanded to give full assent to the continuing interpretation that Jesus gave the scriptures. It ends with these words of investiture: "You shall be my witnesses" (cf. Acts 1, 8).

"These are my words which I spoke to you." It is known that in several encounters Jesus stated frankly that he was the object of Scripture. He took the risk at the

very beginning in the synagogue at Nazareth by announcing, concerning Isaiah 61, 1-2, that this passage referred to him expressly, and consequently that this prophecy was about to be fulfilled (Lk. 4, 16-22). The scandal he caused no doubt made him more circumspect. If he replied openly to Caiphas that he was the Messiah and the Son of God (Mt. 26, 64; Mk. 14, 62; Lk. 22, 67-69), it was because he was about to be delivered from his enemies by death. To his own people, the title of Messiah was explosive, and it was better to admit to less than to risk being misunderstood. However, his enemies needed the scandalous idea that Jesus gave of himself—an idea which they worked to spread—while the disciples suspected the mystery without succeeding in formulating it clearly (cf. Mk. 8, 27-30; Lk. 19, 18-21; Mt. 16, 13-20).

"Everything written about me . . . must be fulfilled." Never has a hero in Scripture dared to present himself in this

way. The episode at Nazareth demonstrated its dangerous singularity. The Eleven were able to accept it because they had just lived through the experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus; he was henceforth justified by his Father and glorified—"being still among you," he said, to show that he would not henceforth be greater simply because he would be at a distance from them, or because of his death, but by his new condition as conqueror of the tomb and of hell.

This lesson of Sunday exegesis has for its first effect the definite discarding from the teaching of the Church of all temptation to Marcionism. The Old Testament, in the thought of Jesus, was Scripture. To rediscover something there is to understand it in its essentials.

PROGRESSIVE TEACHING

All writing is fixation of thought; the scriptures are words of God, eternal thoughts of God incarnated in the language of man for the salvation of men. Who would have, then, the audacity to change any of it, except God himself, and can we suppose that he would be faithful to himself if he contradicted any of his teaching and made a liar of himself? No! But it is fitting that he should intensify the light of the truths he teaches, as our eyes become better able to support it. Scripture is a progressive pedagogy. In the Law, for example, there is a base of theological virtues which gives life to the precise and gloomy decisions of primary justice. There is much charity. The love of God, like that of men, does not remain in a precise milieu; it is excessive, and leads strict justice toward the slopes of the Mount of Beatitudes.

The breath of the Spirit unchains prophecy. All Scripture is prophetic because it is expectant, because it prescribes vigilance, because it demands the sincere confrontation of actions imposed by the Law with the feelings of the heart.

Prophets will be untimely because they move in the eternal. Defeatists, because they oppose the crafty projects of politics which are inclined to do without Yahweh (Is. 7, 10-13). Irritants, because they condemn trade in general, luxury, drunken

revels, and they ask for an accounting of the blood of Naboth.

All through sacred history, the scriptures have been open to the *aggiornamento* which renews the covenants and clears the ground of institutions as decrepit as they are venerable. Now the decisive *aggiornamento* is the incarnation of the Word. Saint John in his Prologue puts it above creation. "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth," says Genesis. "In the beginning was the Word . . . by whom all things were made." The darkness is closed to the inextinguishable light, and the world has not received the Word. Then "the Word became flesh . . . and we have seen his glory"; creation has known a new springtime. "Jesus of Nazareth . . . he who is spoken of in the Law of Moses, and the prophets, we have found him" (Jn. 1, 45).

Monotheism, painfully inculcated in our fathers, remains intact, but Emmanuel—God with us—takes on a realistic meaning that infinitely surpasses the one which Isaiah attributed to him and that was no more than a stepping stone in the building of divine condescension. Emmanuel teaches us to distinguish, in the midst of divine unity, the collegial life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in all things, eternal contemporaries, enjoying equally a single and identical happiness, cooperating in the work of munificence that we call creation. The Son gives witness to the Father whom he reveals, and the Son gives witness to the Father who sends him, just as the Father and the Son will send the Spirit, gift supreme, irrefutable witness. Thus our knowledge of God, through our experience of Jesus, is increased and diversified before the spectacle of the acting Trinity, distributing their roles in order to raise us to themselves. Jesus Christ is thus both man and God, and this duality constitutes only a single being.

Jesus was a man of flesh and bone, born of a woman, and not a phantom.

Courtesy of The Paulist Press, New York, N.Y. This paper is a chapter from Vol. 30 of Concilium, Theology in the Age of Renewal. This volume is entitled 'How Does the Christian Confront the Old Testament?'

Luke reported on two occasions his normal and harmonious growth "in wisdom, in stature and in grace before God and before men" (2, 52; 2, 40; cf. 1, 80). He acquired strength, charm and knowledge; this was the fruit of his docility toward his parents (2, 51) who carefully observed his behavior from the first, and his progress (2, 19, 51).

But the profound psychology of this nature intimately united to the Son of God is inaccessible to our curiosity. We are able to glimpse it, and to sketch a dim landscape on which shines only "the obscure brightness that falls from the stars," but in which the rising sun will reveal the exact relationship of lines and planes.

GOSPEL READING

How did the marvelous humanity of our Savior accord with the divine being which seized it and by which it lived? The problem surpasses our capability. We can testify to the fruits of this supernatural union, but its mechanism escapes us.

We must be content with what the evangelists tell us about the attitudes of Jesus when faced with the events which they lived through with him. This is a good deal, because these good men observed him closely, and they talked about what went on with a rude frankness that confessed plainly their misunderstandings or their slowness to grasp the Master's intentions. More than once he surprised and dismayed them.

It is best to read the gospels and to let the words and the actions of Jesus penetrate the heart. The Man-God is the perfect model of the Father "whom no one has ever seen" but of whom "the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father has told [us]" and the example for men who are filially united to him.

He is *par excellence* the sacramental sign of the divine presence in the world. What we know of his human nature, so rich in supernatural energies, assures us that the instrument forged by the three divine Persons for the incarnation of the Word is perfect. It is in the order conceived by them to attribute to him the use of resources which qualified Jesus to accomplish his mission, except for this: that

the will of his Father, expressed by apparently fortuitous circumstances, was his beacon light. Daily life was significant to him. His visions of eternity did not inspire in him contempt of the temporal, and that was right because he came to perfect the work of the creator by inserting the supernatural in its highest power into the temporal.

Jesus must have known the Bible because he knew that it spoke of him. He had learned to read under the care of his parents; he heard it preached in the synagogue; he prayed the psalms at the familial hearth and with the community. What the gospels tell us of his preaching and of his disputes with the learned men shows that he knew it well, and that it was always present to his spirit. He lived with the Bible, and it lived with him. Scripture pointed out to him the way to go if he would walk without stumbling in the presence of God, and revealed to him the face of his creator.

PROPHETIC ROLE

He was not a scholar. If he attended the village school, he did not carry his studies farther. People did not hesitate to point this out (Jn. 7, 15). An error in doctrine in his discourses would not have been a surprise. They hoped for it, and lacking something better, attributed errors to him so that they might have grounds to accuse him (Mt. 26, 59-63; Mk. 14, 55-59; Jn. 18, 19-22). We might say that he based his approach on the role of the prophets.

When did he discover that Scripture was being accomplished in him? He had always known it, just as he had always known who he was. Son of God from the very first instant, he always behaved as such, just as naturally as we ourselves behave as sons of men. There is no hiatus of a conversion anywhere in the gospels, nor even an appeal for a prophetic vocation such as those heard by so many prophets and which change their whole lives. The manifestations of his baptism and transfiguration constitute not a new investiture, but a declaration from the Father for the use of witnesses, and not of Christ (Jn. 1, 29-34; Mt. 17, 5; Mk. 9, 7; Lk. 9, 35). He conducted himself continually as the Son of

God, and not by fits and starts. His human experiences multiplied; his memory registered them; his awareness of those who surrounded him, judged him, contradicted him, become more penetrating; his reading of the holy books and the reflection this gave rise to were not bookish. He discarded the brambles of the "letter that kills" in order to draw out the living synthesis.

His christological exegesis is not his invention, but he received it and it is thus that he discovered it, sooner or later, with more or less clarity, perfect at each instant for the use that he was to make of it, but always perfectible because, on the one hand, Scripture is inexhaustible (Sir. 24, 29) and, on the other, the capacity of Christ was without limit, as was his docility (Jn. 8, 29).

INSPIRED TEXTS

From preaching to controversies, from the Sermon on the Mount to the parables, he gradually built up a *corpus* of the inspired texts of which he was the hidden object. Abraham, Moses, David, the Servant of Yahweh and the psalmists grouped themselves around him, forming a procession of sketches of the masterpiece which he would realize: God made man, Man-God. It is thus that the new Adam is unthinkable without the old; without Abraham or David, Jesus of Nazareth was without ancestors; without Jeremiah, Job or the Servant, his sufferings and even his resurrection are hard to explain, as are much of his dialectic and his rhetoric, which derive from Scripture. By the use he made of it, he is at the source of Christian preaching of a renewed Old Testament.

Leaving aside the specifically kerygmatic use of Scripture throughout the New Testament, following the method originated by the Master, I propose to discuss: (1) the subject of the prayer of Jesus and the use that he made personally of the psalms; (2) how he substituted his "me" for that of the psalmists and (3) what use the liturgy has made of this; (4) how, finally, the psalter makes an inexhaustible repertoire for the personal piety of the Christian.

1. The life of Jesus was nothing but

a prayer, because he never interrupted his conversation with the Father, even when he was addressing the crowds or performing some act of healing. The Father was present to his consciousness which was attentive to render him this witness.

At certain moments, Jesus showed his prayer—by his gestures, when he raised his eyes toward heaven, when he prostrated himself with his face against the earth at Gethsemani. These were familiar attitudes to the psalmists. It is necessary to add the movements that he made together with the crowd in liturgical assemblies. Finally, Jesus prayed in a loud voice, before witnesses, in particular circumstances such as the raising of Lazarus from the dead, or with his disciples—for example, at the time of meals.

LORD'S PRAYER

Why did he who praised praying in secret (Mt. 6, 5-6) give himself over to a usage whose drawbacks he denounced (Mt. 6, 7-8)? He did not do so, however, until he furnished a formula to his disciples, the Our Father (Mt. 6, 9-13; Lk. 11, 2-4). To teach them to recite it, and to help them memorize it, he certainly had to repeat it with them. According to Luke (11, 1) one of the disciples asked him to teach them to pray "as John taught his disciples." Was he not the teacher of these men he had called to follow him, and what more natural, in forming them in prayer, than to make it in common with them? The Man-God thus gave the example of an essential manifestation to the community: vocal prayer.

This met the needs of human nature—to praise God, to call for his help when in distress, to thank him for his blessings. Could the soul of Jesus remain insensible to the favors which his Father spread through creation, to his continual intervention in the struggles which the elect underwent in order to respond to their vocation? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2, 10-13) presents him to us as the leader of those whom he has redeemed, and he quotes in this connection the author of Psalm 22 (v. 23) who ends his lamentation by predicting the dawn of happy

days, propitious to the action of graces: "[In that moment] I will announce your name to my brothers. I will sing of you in the midst of the assembly." The life of Jesus was a communication of graces, among which prayer in common took first rank, and at which he promised always to preside (Mt. 18, 20).

ISRAEL'S SONGS

2. Jesus prayed in psalms. He liked the rhythm, the poetry, the religious depth of these songs. His soul expressed itself naturally in his maternal language (Hebrew or Aramaic?). He found there the right expression of his fervor, the resources springing up from the earth and the evocation of David, of Jerusalem and of the Temple, which touched him to the quick. How many times in his life had he sung the *Hallel*, a group of psalms (113 to 118) which were intoned at the paschal meal? The last time that he recited it together with his own was on the eve of his death, assassinated by legal sentence. He was singing: "I will not die, but I will live!" and he saluted the coming day, cause of our common joy: "Behold the day that the Lord has made—may it be joy and happiness for us" (Ps. 119, 27, 34). Could he have imagined in this hour what awaited him and not found in these two verses an assured feeling of hope beyond proof? It was the same when he passed around the eucharistic cup at the end of the meal — could he be disturbed over this expression of gratitude: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord" (Ps. 116, 12, 13). In this affecting moment, was not his soul transported by the feeling of imminent danger together with the certainty of final triumph?

This psalm was not written originally with the Last Supper in mind; it served to express the feeling of numerous faithful, but at this hour was it not a fortuitous coincidence? And could the psalmist complain of seeing his eucharist confiscated by Jesus? No! Christ gave supreme meaning to all the religious aspirations of writers who preceded him and whom he recapitulated.

He sealed their plaints with his blood and their joys in those of the resurrection because, more excellent than the angels, superior to Moses the faithful servant, in the quality of Son, he set off in high relief the religion that announced him and that attained its apogee through him.

Jesus, in appropriating to the circumstances of his life the paschal *Hallel*, was only applying a general law on the good use of pious formulas. One can use them again with intelligence and feeling only by giving them a personal trial. Each request of the Our Father, to be sincere on our lips, requires us to make the effort to fix the eyes of the spirit on whatever concrete need corresponds to it at that instant in our life. This accommodation is indispensable; without it we merely parrot words. This is the unique means of avoiding the mechanical purring of a windmill when we are at prayer. Besides, we will recite much less of the Our Father the more intensely we think of it.

GOD HEARS

In the case of Christ, there was better than accommodation: there was realization. Thus was uttered the great cry from the cross: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Lk. 23, 46; Ps. 31, 6) or this plaint drawn from Psalm 22 (v. 2: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"), the poignant lamentation of a persecuted one from whom everyone turns away except for maddened enemies. God has put himself at a distance; he no longer responds. Nevertheless this cry is not one of despair: the question proves sufficiently that it asks for a response.

3. Sacred liturgy is the celebration of the mysteries of salvation organized by the Church, the servant and purveyor of resources left to man by the Master and enriched by the gifts of the Spirit.

The primitive tufa of the mystery is the unfathomable charity of God who created the world freely, without thereby adding anything to his glory or to his happiness. Faithful to men, he would redeem them from their sins. He would use the ministry of his Son who would free them by love—"One will hardly die for a right-

eous man . . ." (Rom. 5,7) and he would rise from the dead to raise us up with him.

Such is the mystery of our hope. It is the raw material of the liturgy. It is used to bring to life the application of the sacraments, the legacy of Christ, where the most humble material elements, under the influence of a supernatural chemistry, become visible and efficient instruments of grace: baptism, the eucharist, penance, holy orders, marriage.

The Church solemnizes the sacraments and their administration. The central point of the liturgy is the Mass, which is at the same time the service of worship rendered to God the Father by Jesus Christ our Lord, and the service of the community which is shaped there by participating in the eucharist and in hearing the Word. The liturgy is a sight for the eyes and a hearing for the ears to instruct the faithful and let them relive the memorial of the Lord.

As for the words, from where are they drawn, if not from the scriptures? By what method, if not that of Christ Jesus? He gave us the example, to the point of substituting himself for the psalmists. For the needs of her liturgy, the Church is careful about texts to be spoken and texts to be

sung, in order to express the doctrine of the mystery evoked. It is from the psalmists, from prophets like Jeremiah, that she will borrow passionate tones to express sadness or hope or joy. Thus was built an immense repertoire, with clever applications, to give the feelings of the Lord Jesus.

4. It is difficult to apply the personal piety of the psalter in our age. We must hope that the faithful will receive in the next twenty or thirty years a scriptural formation which will familiarize them with the content of the rhetoric and religion of the psalms which presently are expressed in an archaic manner that makes them difficult to assimilate.

Meanwhile, it is in meeting the psalms during the course of the liturgical year—in the assemblies, at Mass or at other functions—that the faithful, not to speak of ecclesiastics, will most surely familiarize themselves if they are persuaded that they will encounter Jesus throughout Scripture. If they take the trouble to find him again in the preaching of the New Testament, they will lose their shyness little by little with the doctrine of the Lord, and will discover the New Testament in the Old.

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Oct. 1965 through Aug.-Sept. 1967

*(A limited number of sets of the Seventh Series of Guide
available at \$2.00 a set)*

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2852 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10025

Diocesan Renewal Program

Sister M. Marjorie, S.S.J.

● TWO YEARS AGO on December 8, 1965, the Church's twenty-first Ecumenical Council was concluded. In a terse, pregnant statement, Lawrence Cardinal Shehan wrote: "The Council is over: the Council has just begun." Speaking in the same vein, Pope Paul VI, during the last session, noted: "From now on *aggiornamento* will signify for us a wisely undertaken quest for a deeper understanding of the spirit of the Council and the faithful application of the norms it has happily and prayerfully provided." Clearly then, with the return of the bishops to their respective Sees, now was the time to begin that search for deeper understanding of the spirit of Vatican II and the implementation of the norms it provided.

The "new fire" cast on the earth by the Spirit must be fanned lest its moving, illuminating, and purifying activity leap upward in a single brilliant flare — fade. With the return of Bishop Alexander Zaleski to the Diocese of Lansing, the sacred fire of *aggiornamento* came to in the fall of 1965. Father William J. Rademacher was released from his pastoral duties with a mandate to keep this holy fire burning continuously; it must not be allowed to die out" (Lev 6:6).

Father Rademacher might best be described as a man of prayer, somewhat in the tradition of another Moses. Meek and retiring by nature, he does not glory in his prophetic role, but rather desires "that all would receive the spirit of God" (Num 11: 29). Perhaps here lies the secret of his quiet, but effective influence — an unassuming, deep, personal concern for God's people.

Under his able leadership, a commit-

tee of eighteen laymen, priests, and sisters met for the first time in August, 1966. They planned to bring what Pope Paul referred to as a "fuller understanding and a faithful application" of the Conciliar decrees to the Lansing Diocese. This plan crystallized into what is now known as "The Program for Renewal Through Vatican II." Here is a description of our beginning steps in *aggiornamento*. Aware that the Spirit breathes where He will with astonishing vigor, we share this account, hoping to avoid the least suggestion of exhibitionism or triumphalism. What the Spirit has done in our area may perhaps enrich and bring greater wisdom to the endeavors of others.

Our program, launched in August, 1966, is extending for a period of five years. It will cover the 16 key documents of Vatican II. Because of its central importance and the scope of its rich doctrine, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* was our first topic. Its chapters lay the foundations for subsequent studies of Vatican II documents. The plan of study progressed concurrently on three levels with workshops, lecture-seminar centers, and home discussion groups.

Three-day workshops were held weekly from September through November at the first De Witt Franciscan Retreat House in Lansing, and at T.E.C. Lodge in Battle Creek. Approximately 48 participants were enrolled at each center. Ideally, the par-

Reprinted with permission from The Catholic School Journal, 400 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Published monthly, except in July and August. \$4.00 Annual subscription. This article is from the Dec. 1967 issue.

ticipants were to have numbered twelve priests, twelve laymen, six laywomen, and eighteen sisters. Although this balance was not always maintained with numerical precision, there was always a mixed group of lay men, priests, lay women, and sisters.

Through the liturgy, we aspired to create an atmosphere wherein a sense of community might be experienced, for union in worship forms an inner oneness of heart and mind.

THREE TABLES

*All come together in one place
To await the arrival of God.
All listen to the same living word
of God.*

*All seal their alliance in Blood
And all eat the ONE BREAD.*

In this way, the liturgical celebration did build community by supplying the basic, the motivation, and the strength for loving each other at three tables — in the *dining room*, at the *conference table*, and at the *altar*. We were not disappointed! Here was a Christian community founded on Faith and opened to each other by a shared love. Each day's activities (and they were intense) looked to and drew from the Eucharistic celebration. Lauds and Vespers were prayed in common. Masculine and feminine voices blended in rich harmony as laymen, cleric, and religious praised the Lord, and finally "commended their spirits to Him in peace."

This common effort was not an adolescent impulse toward a leveling process that would seek to destroy authority, banish the sacred, and anathematize the institutional Church. Rather, it was more a "mystique of charity" that discovered its divine dimension in its power to transcend all barriers. *Here were the People of God*. They were not unmindful of the hierarchical nature of the Church, nor that unity exists in diversity, but they were existentially experiencing the bond and the common thrust of a united "kingdom of priests" (Peter 2:9). Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the life and the mystery of the Church was becoming more fully intelligible through meaningful reflection and this

lived experience of community. The welfare of the Church, their own personal and corporate responsibility for her were aspects of the Christian commitment that they were facing in the clear challenge of Vatican II.

For study procedure, we used the seminar approach. Talks on each of the eight chapters of the *Constitution on the Church* were given by priests, laymen and sisters. Personnel for the discussion groups were appointed in advance of the workshop dates to achieve enrichment and balance in thought exchange and the best in group dynamics. Leaders were notified in advance and given guidelines to prepare them to function effectively.

The discussions following upon the talk served to clarify, clinch, and further explore the chapter under study. Participants were encouraged to appraise existing structures, policies and operational patterns on every level of Catholic life in the light of the Church's present understanding of herself and her mission to the world. Mistakes, or policies and practices contrary to the spirit of Vatican II were not to be perpetuated, but corrected or brought into conformity with the teachings of the Spirit as enunciated through the Council.

SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOPS

We believe that the workshops provided the most effective means for communicating the spirit and teaching of the document under consideration. The atmosphere, free from parish, professional, or household concerns, allowed for serious, prayerful consideration of the material, as well as rich opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences. Participants included all the priests and sisters of the diocese, with the exception of a few elderly or incapacitated, as well as a representative group of lay men and women. The workshops were richly productive in both quality and the quantity of proposals issuing from them.

From the standpoint of finances, this phase of our program was the most expensive since the diocese assumed the cost of room and board at both centers. Yet, it

seems clear to us already that the workshop approach with its rich liturgy, experience of community, freedom from distracting influences, provided the "Divine Milieu" inviting to the Spirit! Who shall attempt to put a price tag on the Spirit's charisms? They are priceless!

The second level of study and implementation of the *Constitution on the Church* was the Lecture-Seminar Centers. Twelve centers were designated throughout the diocese: four each in the cities of Flint and Lansing and two each in Jackson and Kalamazoo. They hold a total enrollment of 4,000 adults. A lay co-ordinator charged with the over-all care of a center assumed responsibility for scheduling lectures and readying the physical set-up for the ten meetings in the session.

Our educational approach here was the same as that used on the workshop level, namely, a 20 to 30 minute lecture followed by discussion periods. Hopefully, these would result in suggestions for implementing those norms of the document which would enable the Church in the Lansing Diocese to better achieve her purpose: "to bring all men to share in Christ's saving redemption. . . ." (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*).

LOSSES AND GAINS

The weekly evening sessions at the Lecture-Seminar Centers extended our study program to larger numbers of interested men and women whose schedules would not allow the time required for the closed three-day workshops. This scope seems to have been its sole advantage. There were other inherent weaknesses in this approach, which need to be weighed against the advantage of reaching larger numbers. The time lapse of one week between meetings was one drawback. Another was the absence of the Eucharistic celebration and the consequent failure to achieve any significant experience of community. Without this spirit of inner cohesion, the groups were not as productive as they might have been. There was a high dropout rate. Other factors however, contributed to this attrition, such as bad weath-

er, inopportune timing from late fall and the Thanksgiving holidays; the length of the session (ten weeks was too long); and finally the very size of the groups imposed formality, making it impossible to achieve that rapport so evident in the workshops. However, in most instances, the dropouts tended to gravitate toward the home discussion groups, thus they were not a loss to the total program. What we lost from one phase we gained in another.

Parishioners had a choice of attending one of the Lecture-Seminar Centers or joining a parish discussion group for the purpose of studying the document. Special pamphlets were prepared on each of the eight chapters of the *Constitution on the Church* highlighting the salient doctrinal issues. Thought-starters indicated rich discussion areas and helped make the terminology, with its over-all theological and pastoral message, more intelligible. As in the other two phases, participants strove to arrive at concrete proposals with a faithful application of the norms put forth by the Council.

DISCUSSIONS AT HOME

Home discussion phase involved the greatest number of people. The groupings were, for the most part, neighbors or previously existing discussion groups such as parish study clubs or C.F.M. groups.

The crowning point for each group was when they gathered in one of their homes to celebrate the Eucharist. For weeks, this group of the people of God came together to study, to share, and to discover the Spirit-inspired insights that arose in their midst. Their common goal, the sacrifices entailed in the giving of time and effort, began to create community. Gathered around the altar in a neighbor's home, these priests, sisters and laymen discovered anew that deeper dimension of their identity. It is in the Eucharist that the Christian really comes to know himself to be a child of God and a brother of Jesus Christ. Somehow as each one is caught up in this Paschal Mystery, he discovers that his own worth is realized precisely when he joins the "Yes" of his re-

sponse to that of Jesus. Together, with one another and with Jesus as Priest, this mighty fiat thunders forth from God's people — once again, transforming the chaos of life into order, light, life, and love.

This home level of involvement has much to recommend it. It was the least costly and the most practical timewise. It seems to have evoked greater response and enthusiasm from the most people. The isolation of the many gave way to a growing acceptance of others. The readiness to listen, to share, to risk voicing an opinion, to question honestly, or expose difficulties — all these spell out advances in healthy communication.

At the culmination of the program, each parish in the diocese had one or several assemblies, depending on the size of the parish. The program centered around the Eucharist and was followed by a meal in common. The Church on the parish level was here, knowing herself, expressing herself, realizing herself!

ACCENT ON COMMUNITY

Finally, the united efforts of Bishop, priests, religious and laymen to *respond* intelligently and with faith to the spirit of Vatican II came to a formal close with a Deanery Assembly. Bishop Alexander Zaleski concelebrated with all the pastors of the deanery. In the plain forceful language of liturgical sign, the Church was here repeating anew: *One Sacrifice — One Priesthood — One God and Father of All!*

The whole experience weighed heavy with history and truth, calling up another era and another bishop, St. Augustine with his insightful admission: "*For you, I am bishop, but with you, I am a Christian . . . If then, I am gladder by far to be redeemed with you than I am to be placed over you, I shall, as the Lord commanded, be more completely your servant.*"

But the unique service that a bishop renders is that he teach, sanctify, and govern — that he be in the midst of his people. Bishop Zaleski *was* and *is* with his people. He spoke the Word to all that day, opening the scriptures with the warm, familiar grace of the scholar. His service as teacher was also concretely evidenced in any education and formation that hopefully has been realized through the program which he initiated and supported through to its end. As priest he likewise serves as sanctifier as he daily stands at the altar, even as he did that memorable evening in January, 1967, offering on behalf of his people the Pure Holy Victim "that they might be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing."

A CHURCH FOR OUR WORLD

The entire thrust of the Program for Renewal through Vatican II was first and foremost to achieve "a deeper understanding of the spirit of the Council and the faithful application of the norms" is provided, in the words of Pope Paul. In pursuit of this goal, we found we had happily involved a total of 15,000 people, generated a good deal of interest, as well as a growing sense of community. This was a step away from comfortable isolationist spirituality and a move in the direction of increasing awareness, that, among other things, *the Church is people*. These people are called by God to be a community of Faith and love — a "sacrament" saying very definite things to our present-day world. The Church is also Christ-living-on. Vatican II was meant to deepen our awareness of *who* we are and *why* we are. We included in our attempt to evoke a response from the people of God in the Lansing Diocese. Concerning the depth and fruitfulness of their response, only God can pass the final judgment.

Books Received

The Spirituality of
Teilhard De Chardin
Maria Gratia Martin, I.H.M.
Newman. \$4.95

Sister Maria Gratia Martin has provided a uniquely valuable and highly literate introduction to the thought of one of the great Christian thinkers of our time. She manifests the perception of a thoughtful disciple who ranges confidently over the field covered by the master. But she focuses on the spirituality of this scholar and Christian. This gives a unity and cohesion to this volume often missing in others.

The introduction gives a valuable "Key to Teilhard's Synthesis" which the author suggests might sometimes be appreciated best after the other chapters have been read. A helpful glossary of terms are included. She sees and describes gracefully Teilhard's spirituality as "Flowing from his vision of Christ everywhere giving a face and a heart to the world."

The Postconciliar Parish
Ed. James O'Gara
Kenedy. \$4.95

A year ago, *Commonweal* devoted a special issue to the crucial question of the parish—what it is and should be in our time. About half the book consists of revised versions of these original papers, while the remainder are chapters especially prepared for this present volume. It represents a thoughtful, balanced view of that institution where Catholic renewal will succeed or fail to reach the average American Catholic.

Henry J. Browne opens the book with a resume of the history of the changes in American parishes; Timothy McCarthy treats the clergy's role; Daniel Mallette discusses the inner city parish; and Martin Marty reports a sympathetic Protestant view.

The parish as a community is handled

by Daniel Callahan; Joseph Nolan describes various forward-looking parishes; Gerard Sloyan develops the educational role, and parochial ecumenism is Leonard Swindler's topic.

Other essays consider the parochial school, the nun, parish organizations, suburban parishes, and the future parish that is in the making. Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan closes the collection with a thoughtful, encouraging Afterword.

The Church Made Relevant
Peter J. Riga
Fides. \$5.95

Vatican II in its pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World addressed itself "to the whole of humanity," and it declared that "the Council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world today." Trying to penetrate the "signs of the times," the Council considers in a lengthy introductory section both the hopes and anxieties of contemporary men, and the influence of science and technology on the human family. It recognizes the consequences of these new conditions on the psychological, moral and religious attitudes of men. It sees both the heightened and legitimate expectations of men, but also the evil and ambiguities of man's situation. And it puts the entire moral force of the Church, particularly that of its laity, at the service of all men.

A second section of the document treats specific areas of special urgency: the family, culture, economic and social life; the political community and peace within the community of nations.

Father Riga's studies and previous books have prepared him admirably for this commentary on the Pastoral Constitution. His familiarity with the developing consciousness of the Church on these matters enables him to explain the context and historical growth needed to grasp the

mind of the Council. He is particularly good at relating the actions and writings of John XXIII to these questions. This is an excellent, timely book for anyone interested in the Church's relevance to the agonizing issues of our fateful times.

Where Faith Begins

C. Ellis Nelson

John Knox Press. \$4.75

The author is professor of Practical Theology and head of the Department of Religious Education at New York's Union Theological Seminary. Concerned to "keep religious education open to the spirit of God," he goes to the scriptures with the aids which recent biblical scholarship make available. But he is equally eager to listen to the social scientists and to apply their valid conclusions to improving our objectives and methods in religious education.

His central conclusion is that "faith is communicated by a community of believers and that the meaning of faith is developed by its members out of their history, by their interaction with each other, and in relation to the events which take place in their lives."

Catholic religious educators will find here an excellent modern statement, from another Christian tradition, of elements that increasingly concern us in Christian education. Matters like the surpassing importance of the local community, communication, culture, tradition and their relation to the transmission of faith and its consequences—all come in for lucid and sometimes highly original treatment. The concluding chapter is a most perceptive and informative discussion of how "the Church can use the process [of communicating the faith] more deliberately and intelligently."

Second Living Room Dialogues

Ed. William B. Greenspun, C.S.P., and

Cynthia C. Wedel

Paulist Press. \$1.00

This volume continues the immensely successful project of extending grass roots ecumenism. By means of eight dialogues based on prayer, Bible Reading, meditation, articles for background reading, and

questions, interfaith groups are assisted in confronting various world problems. These problems disturb the Christian conscience and demand appropriate action by Christians striving to be one.

The dialogue themes treated in this volume include: The Church in the World, Tomorrow's World, the Generation Gap, and the North-South Dilemma. There is an invaluable commentary on "The Development of Peoples" by Barbara Ward, along with the materials on The Dignity of Man, War and Peace, the Person in the Modern World. It concludes on the topic: "The Church: Charismatic and Institutional."

The editors have made a discerning choice of the key issues which both encourage and terrify the men of our time. They are issues on which every Christian should be rightly informed and prepared to discuss intelligently.

Helpful guidelines for discussion and projects for action round out this invaluable aid to ecumenical witness. J.T.M.

GUIDE

- A Publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
- Officers: Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P., *Director*. George C. Hagmaier, C.S.P., *Associate Director*. Editor of *Guide*, John T. McGinn, C.S.P.
- Concerned with ecumenism, Christian witness and adult catechetics.
- Published 10 times a year (monthly except for combined issues of June-July and in August-September).
- Annual subscription \$1.00. Single issue 10¢. Bulk lots to seminarians at 5¢ a copy.

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2852 Broadway

New York, New York 10025



Guide Lights

ECUMENICAL SERVICE: NEIGHBORHOOD STYLE ...

In January these pages contained some suggestions and comments about preparing celebrations during the week of prayer for Christian Unity. These were of a general and, hence, not altogether helpful nature. What might be more useful are concrete models of particular services held, and toward this end I would like to sketch one such service in which I was fortunate to participate.

This observance was held in midtown Manhattan on Sunday, January 21st, at three o'clock in the afternoon, at the Broadway United Church of Christ. Several churches sponsored it and actively collaborated with the host church in the preparations. Roman Catholics, Episcopalians and Lutherans were represented, along with the United Church. A couple of preliminary planning sessions were held in which wide representation, both lay and clerical was sought. The response was fair but encouraging.

PRAYING IN CONTEXT ...

Two key decisions were made in the planning phase which proved decisive. The first was the decision to relate the prayer service specifically to the particular community where it was being held. This was the Clinton area of New York City's West Side, an area which is undergoing rapid change and where the residential population is being displaced by business, medical and cultural institutions. Of major concern to the congregations involved was the housing problem. This became the central theme of the meeting.

The second decision was to have the ecumenical prayer be the expression of a

genuine community. In order to achieve this, the usual order of such services was reversed and the program opened with a social in the church hall. For about a half hour members of the various congregations involved mingled with one another and chatted casually as they sipped coffee. Even though many of them were strangers to one another the atmosphere was relaxed and easy. Once this was achieved they were invited to seat themselves informally around the room and various persons from these congregations who were active in social and community work in the area were introduced and briefly described what they were doing. The atmosphere here was of an informal town meeting and came as a pleasant surprise and a revelation to many of those present.

This part of the program occupied about thirty-five minutes. At its conclusion all were invited to move upstairs into the main body of the church where we would close the celebration with a prayer of thanksgiving for the unity achieved and ask God's blessings on our future efforts.

FORMAT OF THE LITURGY ...

The prayer service basically followed the outline of the World Council of Churches Graymoor leaflet with one important change. This involved the lessons. These were selected with a view to what had been discussed downstairs concerning community concerns. Rather than describe them I will quote the first in its entirety.

• • •

The first lessons are from the *Chelsea Clinton News* (a neighborhood weekly widely read in the community):

West of the theatre district, south of Lincoln Center and north of the garment district, lies Clinton, a large residential community.

Clinton is a neighborhood with deep

roots and a colorful past. Its inhabitants are largely working class people, many of whom go back three and four generations.

But, all along the area's boundaries, surrounding developments are encroaching, replacing its low-rent housing with other uses.

Hundreds of families have had to move from this section of Manhattan because of real estate development and hundreds of others are threatened.

Thus says the Lord God: "Oh how lonely she sits, the city once thronged with people, as if suddenly widowed. Though once great among the peoples, she, the queen among cities, is now reduced to bondage." (Lamentations 1:1)

One of the families relocated out of Clinton writes: "We were one of the families that had to get out and make way for office buildings. We were relocated into an apartment in Washington Heights, which neighborhood is completely alien to us, at a rent raise of \$40 and 3 months later a further rent raise. This apartment was no improvement over the one we had, completely old-fashioned and cockroach-infested. We have spent a small fortune to get rid of them and never have. I could tell you further horrors of what happens when the City relocates its people but that would take too long."

"God, hear my prayer. I live in a desert like a bird, in a ruin like an owl. I stay awake lamenting, like a lone bird on the roof." (Psalm 101:7-8)

Realtors assembling parcels of land for possible future office buildings or high-rent apartments demolish the old tenements and brownstones and replace them with parking lots in the interim.

In the last few months almost 400 families have been forced out of the Clinton area due to the expansion of the area's two largest hospitals. Hundreds of other families are right now threatened by the plans of other realtors.

The residential community of Clinton is being nibbled to death.

Thus says the Lord God: "For these crimes in Israel, I have made my decree and will not relent: because they

have sold good people for silver and the poor man for a pair of sandals, because they trample on the heads of ordinary people and push the poor out of their path." (Amos 2:6-7)

Low-rent housing for people over 60 years old and laws to protect senior citizens living in hotels are two desperate needs in the Clinton area which were forcefully brought to everyone's attention during the mass evictions between October 1st and November 2nd.

The Clinton area is no country for old men. Some 400 senior citizens had to move because of the closing of their hotels in the Times Square Area.

At that time Jesus said: "Why do you break away from the commandment of God for the sake of a law? For God said: Do your duty to your father and mother. But you say: If anyone says to his father or mother: 'Any thing that might have been used to help you is dedicated to another fund,' he is rid of this duty to father or mother. In this way you have made God's word null and void by means of your law." (Matthew 15:3-6)

Project Find was tremendously helpful in alleviating the distress of many of these people. But for one, John Langle, aged 68, it was not enough.

Fed up with rumor and worry, Langle let himself be moved from his hotel where he had lived alone for 27 years to another hotel nearby. He died there from a heart attack the next day.

"He was just out of the hospital," said one of his friends "and I reminded him that he did not have to leave so soon. But he was all broken up about moving and thought he might as well get it over with."

*An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick . . .*
(Yeats)

Thus says the Lord God: "Listen to this you elders; all inhabitants of the city, attend. Has anything like this ever happened in your day, or in your father's day? Tell it to your sons, let your sons tell it to their sons, and their sons to a generation after them." (Joel 1:2-3)

WEST SIDE STORY

The next lesson is taken from LA VIDA (the study of poverty among Puerto Ricans in San Juan and New York by Oscar Lewis):

To a young man living in a slum of San Juan, Puerto Rico, New York City looks like a good place to live. It will be easy to get a job; it will be easy to make lots of money; it will be easy to get things never had before. So he comes. And he and many of his friends have settled in the Clinton area of New York City.

Thus says the Lord God: "I will pour out my spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." (Joel 3:1)

"Well, here I am in New York. My first job was 'el delivery', walking all over everywhere with a big suitcase, eight hours a day, for forty-five dollars a week.

"That's all I did when I started working here, 'el delivery.' That's why many Puerto Ricans give themselves up to a life of vice. . . . Because you feel lower than other people when you have to take a job as a delivery boy. And that might make you turn to stealing or to taking drugs, it might lead you to quit your job and become a tramp. And then you'd be a failure for sure. Because here in New York if you don't work, you don't eat. This isn't Puerto Rico, where if the neighbor sits down to a meal he'll send a plate of food over to you. Here people throw out food rather than give it away.

"The only thing that has any value up here is money. If you're broke you starve. People are sour and talk rough. If you accidentally bump into someone, it gets you nowhere to say 'I'm sorry.'"

Thus says the Lord God: "All her people groan as they search for bread; they barter their valuables for goods to keep life in them. Look, God, and mark how despised I am." (Lamentations 1:11)

READINGS AND HOMILY

The lessons and Scripture passages were alternated between two readers who stood at opposite sides of the sanctuary. The effect suggested a dialogue between the Word of God and a concerned community.

The second reading was from Chapter 32 of Jeremiah, which deals with the prophet's purchase of a lot in Jerusalem in spite of its impending fall. The third lesson was from 1 Thessalonians where St. Paul exhorts the early Christians to assist their leaders in building up the community. The homily endeavored to draw the lessons from these texts and apply them to the local situation.

AUDIENCE REACTION . . .

The effect of all this on the participants was most gratifying. Most came with the understandable expectation that they were attending simply another ecumenical prayer service. The reversal of order surprised them, as did the introduction of the "town hall meeting." However, they responded enthusiastically and their attention to the readings was marked. Seated facing the congregation, I couldn't help but notice a visible reaction and concentration that swept through the congregation when the first reading began. One small index of the success of this service was the fact that it consumed two hours and all were surprised when they noted this fact.

A MODEL, NOT A BLUEPRINT . . .

This particular "worship experience" has been dealt with at some length because I think there are many who would welcome the chance to examine concrete examples. Obviously it is not offered as a universal model. It would be meaningless outside of the context from which it arose. However, the lesson of this model lies in examining the local context and seeing what can be done in terms of expressing existing unities in a meaningful way. This model is but one illustration and I hope may be an encouragement for the development of many others.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.